

Book Reviews

The Western Journal of Medicine does not review all books sent by publishers, although information about new books received is printed elsewhere in the journal as space permits. Prices quoted are those given by the publishers.

PHYSICIAN-SPONSORED HMO DEVELOPMENT—Prepared by Eric R. Wagner and Valerie J. Hackenberg for the American Society of Internal Medicine. ASIM, 1101 Vermont Ave, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005, 1986. 63 pages, \$10 (ASIM members), \$15 (nonmembers).

This book provides a brief guideline for use by any group of physicians considering establishing a nonstaff model health maintenance organization (HMO). Its essence is contained in three primary chapters: "Determining the Feasibility of HMO Development," "Organizational Development" and "Development Activities."

Each chapter contains brief descriptions of the actions necessary before proceeding to the next stage of HMO development. For example, organizing physicians, selecting a consultant and assessing the market and financial implications are key elements in feasibility determination. The "Organizational Development" chapter includes guides for selecting legal counsel and establishing governing and management structures. The most lengthy section, "Development Activities," outlines the myriad activities involved in making an HMO operational—for example, capital formation, legal and regulatory compliance, provider recruitment and selection credentialing, utilization management, quality assurance and compensation. Each chapter concludes with a series of questions that are basic to the completion of the tasks outlined in the previous discussion.

The book is very useful in that it sets forth both the steps and the timetables involved in establishing an HMO. For physicians with limited knowledge of HMO development, this information can be invaluable in determining whether to engage in initial developmental tasks. Due to the brevity of the book, however, its descriptions of the activities do not provide specific direction on the accomplishment of each task. Instead, it admonishes physicians that "selection of a consulting firm to assist the physician group with the feasibility study, development of the HMO and, possibly, management of the HMO is a very important task." The lack of substantive guidance for assessment of consultants' performance is a drawback for those who are not well-versed in such appraisals.

Almost as an afterthought, a section on Medicare and Medicaid HMOs is included as the final chapter. HMOs serving the Medicare and Medicaid populations must meet certain requirements in their eligibility and operations and those complexities are described in a clear and straightforward manner. This chapter is well worth reading simply for the explanation of how the Adjusted Community Rate, or the premium a Medicare HMO would charge its enrollees, is computed.

In summary, physicians will find the book useful in delineating the activities of HMO development and as a checklist in completing those tasks. After reading it, some physicians may decide against undertaking this monumental task, as it is something not to be approached in a casual manner.

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NEUROLOGY IN PRIMARY CARE—Editor: Robert C. Cantu, MD, Chief, Neurosurgical Service; Associate Chairman, Department of Surgery, and Director, Service of Sports Medicine, Emerson Hospital, Concord, Mass; Associate Editors: Russell B. Butler, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology, Boston University School of Medicine, and Chief of Neurology, Emerson Hospital, Concord, and Michael J. Moore, MD, Associate Professor of Neurology, Boston University School of Medicine. Macmillan Publishing Company, 866 Third Ave, New York, NY 10022, 1985. 424 pages, \$55.

The stated purpose of this book is to provide "a practical and current reference covering all of the commonly encountered disorders of the central nervous system." The editors also state, "we have excluded the esoteric and kept this volume to a manageable length." Unfortunately, however, the editors did not follow the above stated purposes: a significant amount of space has been devoted to neurologic illnesses that can only be considered rare and

esoteric. For example, in the chapter devoted to "Disorders of Muscle," the metabolic myopathies received as much attention as did the more common forms of childhood and adult muscular dystrophies. The chapter entitled "Inherited Metabolic Diseases" should not even have been included as each of the disorders is very rare and there are a significant number of conceptual errors present. The author of this chapter classifies the neuronal ceroid lipofuscinoses (Bielschowsky-Jansky, Spielmeier-Vogt and Kuf's Diseases) along with adrenoleukodystrophy as lysosomal storage diseases. While the enzyme deficiency that causes these disorders remains unknown, there is certainly no evidence that lysosomal enzymes are involved. In fact, all evidence to date suggests that adrenoleukodystrophy is a lipid storage disorder resulting from an enzymatic defect in the "peroxisome."

Many of the chapters in this volume are of high quality and contain much useful information for the "primary care physician" but because of the uneven quality and high cost, this reviewer cannot recommend the book. The "primary care physician" in need of a text covering disorders of the nervous system would be better off purchasing one of the many excellent standard textbooks of neurology.

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THE SNOWBIRD DIET: 12 Days to a Slender Future—and a Lifetime of Gourmet Eating!—Donald Robertson, MD, MSc, and Carol P. Robertson. Warner Books Hardcover and Trade Paperback, Division of Warner Communications Company, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103, 1986. 290 pages, \$8.95.

The Snowbird Diet is a 290-page book that presents a plan formulated by experts in weight management and related fields—bariatrics, nutrition, exercise physiology, psychology and haute cuisine as practiced by the Southwest Bariatric Nutrition Center in Scottsdale, Arizona. This is a complete medical weight loss program that integrates fat loss with fitness, preventive medicine and life extension. This reviewer rates it as a safe, scientific and highly motivating plan that offers real hope for permanent weight management. It treats overweight as a potentially serious medical disease and allows the active high powered people who want to travel, entertain, dine out and enjoy a good life the opportunity to do so while keeping trim and fit. It does not present a fad diet nor a magic cure for overweight persons.

The book is divided into four parts. Part one explains the Snowbird Diet as a 12-day program for weight loss as preventive medicine and life extension. Part two explains how the Snowbird Diet really works and presents the experience of many years of Dr Robertson's practice as an internist and gastroenterologist with much experience in weight reduction. Part three describes the essential details for success of the program. Part four presents the keys to a slender lifetime and the details in entering the normal life without gaining weight. There are a good bibliography and references which include information on exercise, psychological awareness, maintenance, general health and nutrition. The index is detailed.

The term "Snowbird" is derived from the frostbitten Northerners who flock to the Sun Belt for warmth and total revitalization. Dr Robertson is a graduate of Princeton University and Cornell University Medical College, and is a nationally recognized authority on nutrition and weight loss. Carol P. Robertson is Executive Director of the Southwestern Bariatric Nutrition Center and a gourmet cook whose cooking has been featured in many magazines and articles concerning food problems and how to solve them.

This highly readable book is based on a 12-day meal-by-meal eating plan including gourmet recipes and shopping lists. There is an emergency diet for those traveling and dining out that may also be followed by dieters not interested in gourmet meals.

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